THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) As a follow up to the 'Look East Policy', the Hon'ble Prime Minister, in his address to the first East Asia Summit held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005, highlighted the need for a Pan-Asian Free Trade Agreement and Asian Economic Community for deeper regional economic integration. No specific response has emerged from the other regional countries in this regard.

(c) Such initiatives will have a positive effect on our bilateral trade and economic relations with our regional trading partners.

Establishment of SEZs

184. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up a number of Special Economic Zones in different parts of the country in response to the request of various State Governments;

(b) if so, the details thereof, with the number of SEZs already set up and those proposed to be set up under the plan;

(c) the response from the trading community to the proposal;

(d) whether corporate entities are demanding amendments to the labour laws so as to make it responsive to the liberalized industrial and trading environment; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and Centre's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) No, Sir. There is no proposal to establish any new Special Economic Zone (SEZ) by the Central Government. 28 SEZs, including 7 converted Export Processing Zones (EPZs) owned by the Central Government, are already operational. In addition, 95 SEZs are in the pipeline.

(d) and (e) Labour Laws as enforced by the State Governments concerned are applicable to SEZs.

Coir exports

185. SHRI B.J. PANDA:
MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Coir exports from India have touched an all time high during 2005-06;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the share of Orissa in these exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and b) Yes Sir, the export touched an all time high both quantity-wise and value-wise. The export of coir and coir products during the year 2005-06 amounted to 1,36,027 tonnes valued at Rs. 508.45 crores. The export during the 2004-05 was of the order of 1,22,927 tonnes valued at Rs. 473.40 crores.

(c) The share of Orissa in the export of coir and coir products from India is practically nil.

Negative impact of FTAs

186. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian corporate majors are worried about the negative impact from FTAs between India, ASEAN and West Asian countries apprehending that the FTAs will work against local companies and that they will discourage investment and inflow of new technology into the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's response thereto?